

# Active Inclusion Newcastle

## Newcastle's Financial Inclusion Briefing: 2017-18 Q4

Promoting financial inclusion is an important part of Newcastle City Council and its partners' commitment to tackling inequality. Our approach to financial inclusion is based on working in partnership through our Financial Inclusion Group to provide information, advice and support to residents when they face difficulties, and promoting early intervention to prevent problems reaching crisis point. Whilst many of the causes of poverty are out of our control by working together we can make the best use of the resources available to make the greatest difference for residents.

To support this cooperative approach, we aim to share systems, and priorities to help meet the challenges created by the welfare reforms (£129m cut in Newcastle by 2023) and austerity measures (£283m cut by 2020). To help facilitate this we produce a quarterly briefing note to create a common language, to highlight trends and to review our responses to the following five objectives in our Financial Inclusion Action Plan:

- 1. Maximise income and respond to the welfare reforms**
- 2. Support residents to manage their money, increase financial resilience, reduce harmful debt and prevent homelessness**
- 3. Help residents to train, gain and remain in employment**
- 4. Promote affordable credit options**
- 5. Reduce fuel poverty, increase financial resilience and promote access to bank accounts**

Our quarterly review process helps to create collective agreement about the issues residents face and the difference we are making to those who experience financial exclusion. We recognise that there are limitations in some of the data collected, as organisations invariably count their interventions differently. However, there is sufficient agreement for us to produce these briefing notes to demonstrate the work of the Financial Inclusion Group. Our main aim is to make a positive difference and reduce inequality by prioritising financial inclusion, not to produce a piece of pure academic research. However, we welcome partners to point out any errors or opportunities for improvement.

### Headlines:

- Newcastle has been shortlisted for Co-operative Council of the Year 2018. Our partnership approach to financial inclusion underlines our core commitment to protecting the most vulnerable. Further information is available at [www.uk.coop/COTY\\_Shortlist](http://www.uk.coop/COTY_Shortlist)
- Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer pilot with Jobcentre Plus – 339 referrals from Jobcentre Plus to partners up to 31 March 2018 for claimants at risk of homelessness. The Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer Multidisciplinary Team started working together on 9 October 2017 and have been identifying residents most at risk due to the “bedroom tax”. By April 2018, the team had approached 123 residents and had 66 active cases
- Details of the latest benefit changes are listed in March 2018's Benefit Bulletin, available at [www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfarerights](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfarerights)
- Newcastle is 1 of 10 pathfinders for the Local Government Association Reshaping Financial Support pathfinder programme on ‘integrated support for disadvantaged households’
- Newcastle is one of three areas working with Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) to pilot Reimagine Debt, an innovative approach to supporting clients with problem public sector debt
- The next Financial Inclusion Group seminar is on 12 July 2018 and will focus on funded childcare offers. For more information, or to book a place, email [financial.inclusion@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:financial.inclusion@newcastle.gov.uk)

# 1: Maximise income and respond to the welfare reforms (including digital inclusion)

**Table 1.1: Annualised benefit gains and clients advised by the Newcastle Advice Compact**

	2016-17	Q1 (17-18)	Q2 (17-18)	Q3 (17-18)	Q4 (17-18)	2017-18
Benefit gains	£30,166,554	£6,846,660	£7,880,809	£6,782,810	£8,480,264	£30,000,543
Clients advised	18,323	4,259	5,285	4,356	5,169	19,069

## Trends:

Table 1.1 shows that between Q3 and Q4 of 2017-18 the number of clients advised by the Newcastle Advice Compact increased by 19% and benefit gains increased by 25%. The increases seen this quarter are due to advisers supporting residents with benefit underclaims and underpayments, particularly disability benefits, through mandatory reconsiderations and appeals. During 2017-18 benefit gains reduced (1%), but the number of clients seen increased (4%), as more time is being spent on complex cases with less financial gains.

Citizens Advice Newcastle (CAN) continue to report an increase in enquiries from people with mental health issues and people from abroad, which can take longer to deal with. Newcastle Advice Compact partners are also finding that residents are experiencing difficulties in navigating changes from their 'legacy benefits' to Universal Credit (UC), and in some cases, are seeing a reduction in income from 'legacy benefits' to UC due to the lack of transitional protection. Partners also report that residents are sometimes wrongly advised to claim UC, resulting in a loss of income, and that the UC system of explicit consent for advisers needing to act on their clients' behalf makes it more difficult and time consuming to resolve issues. For more information and guidance on UC visit [www.newcastle.gov.uk/universalcredit](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/universalcredit).

In April 2018 Parliament's [Work and Pensions Select Committee](#) gathered evidence on people's experience of benefit sanctions. This is in addition to the recent publication of a [five year academic study](#) considering the realities of sanctioned claimants. The study highlights that for most claimants, welfare conditionality fails to prompt behavior change, or provide meaningful improvements to job prospects or work outcomes. In Newcastle, there has been a 46% fall in Jobseeker Allowance (JSA) sanctions as a proportion of claimants, while attendance at the joint Jobcentre Plus and Newcastle City Council run 'Benefit sanctions; How to Avoid Them' training for professionals and volunteers increased by 22% in 2017-18. The next training session is 19 September 2018. Further information is available at [www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals).

## What we are doing:

- As part of making financial inclusion everyone's business the [spectrum of advice for benefits](#) continues to help residents and services better understand what level of benefit support that services provide, whilst providing information, support & training for those organisations. This includes the following targeted face to face and e-learning training:
  - The 'Introduction to Benefits' tiers 1 and 2 e-learning modules were completed by 44 people in Q4 2017-18 (98 people in 2017-18)
  - A new 'Introduction to Universal Credit' e-learning module is available and will be targeted to staff supporting affected residents. For more information visit [www.newcastle.gov.uk/informationforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/informationforprofessionals)

- Face to face 'Introduction to Benefits' training was completed by 42 people in Q4 2017-18. During 2017-18 this training was completed by 124 people, an increase of 57% on 2016-17, due in part to targeted sessions provided for substance misuse workers. The next training sessions are on 18 July 2018 and 18 October 2018. For more information, or to book a place e-mail [activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk)
- 3,012 people receive our bi-monthly benefit bulletins providing the latest benefit news and targeted information and 'tips' to help navigate the benefits system and avoid problems. To sign up visit [www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals)
- The 'Where to get benefit and debt advice in Newcastle' booklet is distributed bi-annually to 3,066 subscribers and internal staff. It provides details of organisations providing benefit, debt and financial inclusion advice and is available at [www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals)
- We write a quarterly article for the national Institute of Money Advisers' Quarterly Account magazine, distributed to 1,930 money advisers
- During Q4 2017-18 there were 8,242 unique visits to the welfare rights and money advice section of Newcastle City Council's website – [www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfarerights](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfarerights)
- From April 2018 Newcastle Welfare Rights Service (WRS) have taken on the open appeal cases of the closed Age UK service
- Active Inclusion Newcastle has provided benefit information for GP TeamNet, the web based portal for the health service. Our information had 99 views in Q4. Between 1 September 2016 and 30 May 2018 we had 662 views. Ongoing support is provided to Primary Care Navigators who work with local GPs, and the WRS are working with local GP practices to target disability and related benefit advice to older people
- From May 2018 we have seconded an Active Inclusion Officer to work with Jobcentre Plus to reduce the risk of homelessness. For more information contact James Williams [james.williams@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:james.williams@newcastle.gov.uk)
- We are continuing to develop the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer, a two-year programme to consolidate Active Inclusion Newcastle and strengthen our citywide approach to identifying residents' risks of homelessness related to the foundations for a stable life: somewhere to live, an income, financial inclusion and employment opportunities The Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer Multidisciplinary Team started working together on 9 October 2017 and started targeting residents in November 2017. By April 2018, the team had approached 123 residents and had 66 active cases.

### What next:

- Newcastle is 1 of 6 councils shortlisted to work with Crisis to end homelessness
- Newcastle City Council is working with partners to prepare for the Homelessness Reduction Act's for the duty to refer, which comes into effect on 1 October 2018 and means that certain public authorities including prisons, probation services, hospitals and Jobcentre Plus must refer homeless clients to the local housing authority. For more information e-mail [activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk)
- Given the impact of austerity measures and reductions in benefit support on household budgets, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has developed a [definition of destitution](#), which WRS is adopting. This will help us to better identify residents at risk of destitution and target support
- Active Inclusion Newcastle is supporting [Fuse, the Centre for Translational Research in Public Health](#) and [Newcastle University Institute of Health & Society](#) in their research into the impacts of UC of health and wellbeing
- CAN continues to extend their advice provision by linking into existing services that local people already use. For more information phone 0344 2451288

- Newcastle City Council and Northumberland County Council Revenue and Benefits services are to merge by 1 September 2018
- In May 2018 WRS launched an outreach service in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support & Information Centre Freeman Hospital. For more information contact WRS on 0191 277 2633
- WRS will be undertaking Tax Credit take up sessions at the Bangladeshi Centre in June and July 2018. For more information contact WRS on 0191 277 2633
- WRS' Children with Disabilities project began to receive automatic referrals for children who receive an Educational Health Care plan in May 2018. Further information will be reported in the Q1 2018-19 Financial Inclusion briefing

### **Shelter case study:**

S was referred to Shelter in December 2017 by her landlord because her rent account had fallen into arrears. S is a European Economic Area (EEA) national and came to the UK to work, she has two young children and had recently left her employment to have a baby. Unfortunately, due to her work contract, S was not entitled to maternity pay and had been refused UC due to the length of time between finishing employment and having her baby. S' only income was child benefit and her landlord was concerned over her growing rent arrears.

Shelter and S' landlord worked together to provide the following support and prevent homelessness and destitution:

- Shelter looked into S' UC decision and advised that, unfortunately, the only way she could become eligible would be to return to employment. S had recently separated from her partner and her children were not yet at school age, making employment difficult
- S was helped to find a childminder and suitable part time work
- Shelter supported S to reapply for UC and helped her with crisis applications for food and utilities whilst her UC application was assessed. S' claim was refused on the grounds of failing the Habitual Residency Test as she was not working. Shelter requested a Mandatory Reconsideration of this decision
- S' landlord was in regular contact with Shelter, via Sustaining Tenancy meetings, to help avoid action. However, as they had not received payment for over 6 months they had to serve a Notice Seeking Possession. The landlord advised that they would progress to court and that all court costs would be added to debts owed.
- As a result of this, Shelter submitted a new claim for UC (whilst still awaiting the outcome of the Mandatory Reconsideration), and stressed that S was in employment
- UC was awarded in May 2018. The landlord was informed and direct payments for rent were requested. S was supported to develop a sustainable budget so she could make regular agreed payments towards her rent arrears

S' Landlord did not apply to Court due to the regular contact and updates provided by Shelter, as a result S was spared from court fees of around £350. Shelter are still pursuing the earlier request for a Mandatory Reconsideration through agreed escalation routes in order to have S' UC claim backdated to her original application date of January 2018.

## Digital inclusion

**Table 1.2: Initiatives to promote digital inclusion**

	2016-17	Q1 (17-18)	Q2 (17-18)	Q3 (17-18)	Q4 (17-18)	2017-18
Digital skills courses	40 sessions 289 attended	19 sessions 157 attended	16 sessions 132 attended	24 sessions 118 attended	28 sessions 96 attended	87 sessions 503 attended
People's Network take-up	-	32%	31%	28%	29%	30%
One to one digital sessions	339	36	32	33	28	129
Hours volunteered	1,156	437	388	259	389	1,473

### Trends:

Table 1.2 summarises activities to support residents to get online. Between Q3 and Q4 of 2017-18 the number of digital skills courses offered increased by 17%. As more courses are now run with volunteer support we are able to offer additional sessions for residents (between 2016-17 and 2017-18 the number of digital courses offered increased by 118%). For more information about the range of support available to help residents get online contact Lisa Dawson [lisa.dawson@yhn.org.uk](mailto:lisa.dawson@yhn.org.uk).

### What we are doing:

- There are 610 free or low cost digital access points and 72 organisations offering IT training in Newcastle. For more information visit [www.getonlinenewcastle.co.uk](http://www.getonlinenewcastle.co.uk)
- Free Wi-Fi is available in 69 public buildings and city centre streets increasing opportunities for people to get online. For more information visit <http://www.godigitalnewcastle.co.uk/wifi>
- 'Learn My Way' online basic skill sessions have been scheduled to continue to run until July 2018. For more information, or to book a place, visit [Newcastle Libraries' event webpage](#)
- During Q4 2016-17 we held 6 Techy Tea Parties for customers with a tablet, iPhone or smartphone that they want to learn more about. Techy Tea Parties take place on the second and last Thursdays of the month at City Library. For more information, or to book a place, visit [Newcastle Libraries' event webpage](#)
- A Digital Inclusion Network has been established to bring together voluntary organisations, training providers, public bodies and charities to look at digital inclusion in the city. For more information or to get involved, contact Lisa Dawson [lisa.dawson@yhn.org.uk](mailto:lisa.dawson@yhn.org.uk)
- City Library deliver one to one support for customers who need digital support accessing Universal Credit. For more information contact Lisa Dawson [lisa.dawson@yhn.org.uk](mailto:lisa.dawson@yhn.org.uk)
- City Job Centre invited Lisa Dawson to talk to their Work Coaches about the digital support available for residents and how this is accessed. Following this Lisa now attends City Job Centre for 1 hour per week to meet with Work Coaches and residents to discuss the help available to get online
- Specialist Get Online Champion Training sessions for staff from local community and charity organisations continue to run monthly at the City Library. As of April 2018, 154 people have attended. For more information contact Lisa Dawson [lisa.dawson@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.dawson@newcastle.gov.uk)
- Disability North is offering digital drop in sessions to help disabled people get online. For more information contact Bea Groves-McDaniel [beatrixgrovesmcdaniel@disabilitynorth.org.uk](mailto:beatrixgrovesmcdaniel@disabilitynorth.org.uk)

**What next:**

- In response to the planned closure of the West End Job Centre an online UC course will be delivered at West End Library from May 2018. The course is specifically for UC claimants and is designed to show residents how to complete their mandatory online UC tasks and update their Journal. For more information contact Lisa Dawson [lisa.dawson@yhn.org.uk](mailto:lisa.dawson@yhn.org.uk)
- The Newcastle Advice Compact is working with Jobcentre Plus to develop an exception reporting procedure to help identify and better respond to issues where residents are unable to get online. For further information email [financial.inclusion@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:financial.inclusion@newcastle.gov.uk)

## 2: Support residents to manage their money, increase financial resilience, reduce harmful debt and prevent homelessness

**Table 2.1: Debt and budgeting advice provision by Newcastle Advice Compact and its impact on Newcastle residents including homelessness prevention through debt advice**

	2016-17	Q1 (17-18)	Q2 (17-18)	Q3 (17-18)	Q4 (17-18)	2017-18
Debts written off	£3,732,363	£927,758	£347,502	£531,668	£257,605*	£2,604,533*
Clients advised	4,782	1,622	1,609	1,824	1,399*	6,454*
Homelessness prevention	815	532	434	428	391*	1,785*

\* Figure does not include all partners; final return date expected July 2018

### Trends:

Between Q3 and Q4 of 2017-18 the number of clients advised by the Newcastle Advice Compact decreased. This is mainly due to being unable to report figures for all partners this quarter. The amount of debts written off varies as it depends on the type of debts that residents have and on their individual circumstances. Annually, the number of clients advised by the by Newcastle Advice Compact in 2017-18 has increased by 35% on 2016-17 (despite not having all figures for Q4), highlighting the growing demand for debt and budgeting advice.

In 2017-18 there has been a 128% increase in homelessness preventions compared to the previous year. This is largely attributed to improved recording by Your Homes Newcastle's (YHN) Advice and Support Workers. Additionally, from Q1 2017-18 the number of clients advised includes families affected by the lower benefit cap that are supported by Changing Lives Floating Support Service. Advisors note that the impact of welfare reforms, particularly the lower benefit cap, is exacerbating poverty and money worries, adding further complexity to complex cases.

Money Matters Debt Advisers continue to monitor sustainability of their clients' budgets. During this quarter, out of 108 households for whom budgets were completed:

- **64% had sustainable budgets**
- **18% were able to meet their living costs because of additional financial support**, such as DHPs to help pay their rent and the Supporting Independence Scheme (SIS) to replace unaffordable goods bought on hire purchase
- **18% had unsustainable budgets** where there was no additional financial support available

### What we are doing:

We continue to take a coordinated citywide approach to supporting Newcastle residents affected by money problems and debt. Examples include:

- Supporting households on Housing Benefit affected by the lower benefit cap – at 28 February 2018, the Active Inclusion Unit's information showed that there were 314 households in Newcastle who are affected by the benefit cap:
  - YHN's Advice and Support Team continue to support their affected tenants
  - The [Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer](#) multidisciplinary team have been identifying and approaching Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) residents affected by the "bedroom tax" and benefit cap who have been identified as at particular risk of homelessness since 12 November 2017. By 17 April 2018 the team had approached 124 of these residents with support. The team's second quarterly 'progress and learning' report will be published on 6 June 2018, highlighting key learning from the team's work with these residents

- The Active Inclusion Service co-ordinates support for private and social rented households and prioritises households according to the potential risk of homelessness: 'high risk' households include families that are losing £60.00pw or more in Housing Benefit and/or households that are vulnerable due to their prior or current involvement with prevention services. 'High risk' households are referred to Money Matters for support. Between 1 June 2016 and 31 March 2018, Money Matters offered advice and support to 183 affected households. Information on some of the outcomes and outputs of this support and also on the barriers that the families need to overcome to improve their finances and achieve financial stability is highlighted below:
  - 37 households are no longer affected by the benefit cap
  - 66 households received debt advice and 40 received budgeting advice; 37 were awarded DHPs which amounted to £47,170 in extra income; 29 were prevented from homelessness and 12 were referred to Newcastle Futures for employment support
  - 184 barriers to a stable life were recorded against 57 benefit cap households, including 34 households in unaffordable housing, 24 without access to childcare, 15 with no confidence of securing employment and 17 with an addiction which reduces their ability to pay priority bills
- Supporting residents who are claiming UC – YHN and Money Matters provide Personal Budgeting Support (PBS) to residents who need help managing their money as a result of claiming UC. 187 referrals were made during Q4 and a total of 657 for 2017-18, an increase of 182% on 2016-17
- Supporting residents who are applying for a DHP to help them pay their rent – in Q4 Revenues and Benefits referred 64 residents to Money Matters for budgeting support following a DHP application. Across 2017-18 Revenues and Benefit referred 198 residents to Money Matters, up from 33 referrals in 2016-17
- We provide training to partners as part of our [spectrum of advice for money management \(budgeting and debt\)](#). As part of this approach:
  - The 'Debt Awareness' e-learning module was completed by 13 people in Q4 and provides basic debt information and details of organisations residents can be signposted to for advice
  - Quarterly face to face 'Introduction to Budgeting' training was completed by 19 people in Q4. Details of the Active Inclusion Newcastle training programme is available online at [www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals)
  - 313 subscribers received our quarterly debt bulletins, an increase of 47 subscribers on the previous quarter, providing the latest debt news and targeted information. To view and sign up for debt bulletins visit [www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals) or email [activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk)
- Money Matters supported 11 vulnerable residents to obtain a Debt Relief Order (DRO) in 2017-18 through its discretionary DRO fund

### What next:

- Newcastle is one of the three local authorities chosen to pilot a new approach to problem debt – the Civil Service initiative "Re-imagine Debt" – which involves government departments identifying vulnerable people early and providing joined-up support to people who struggle with debt
- In March 2017 Money Advice Service (MAS) released the [Standard Financial Statement \(SFS\)](#), a single format for financial statements, allowing debt advisors and creditors to work together to achieve the best outcomes for people struggling with their finances. We are consulting with MAS about Newcastle City Council's (NCC) Corporate Debt Strategy to help us create more consistency between Newcastle City Council's collection departments and debt advisers, and a smoother transition through the debt collection process for residents who owe money to Newcastle City Council

- As part of our work to support residents with debts and to roll out the SFS, we are working with Advice Compact partners to develop a consistent approach to budgeting support and debt advice for residents whose income is insufficient to meet their basic needs, and/or to afford to make debt repayments. The first workshop was held in February 2018 and this work will be the topic of a Financial Inclusion Group Seminar in October 2018
- CAN report an increase in gambling related debt and are working locally and nationally with gambling organisations to fund support to those most affected

### **Money Matters case study:**

N was referred to Money Matters for help with debt and money management following an award for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP). N lives in Housing Association accommodation with her 3 children aged 6 months, 1 year old and 3 years old. N had had an operation on her foot to put screws in her toes but one screw went into the wrong place and N was waiting for an operation to correct this procedure. N's health prevented her from returning to work in a care home whilst she awaited her operation on her foot. Additionally, N's housing benefit was capped from £110 per week to £66 per week.

Money Matters provided debt and budgeting advice and helped N make a successful application to the Supporting Independence Scheme for living room and bedroom curtains, two wardrobes, two chests of drawers, a vacuum cleaner, an ironing board and a table. Money Matters helped N make a successful Discretionary Housing Payment application which was awarded at £40 per week leaving N to pay £4 per week herself. Repayment of rent arrears were successfully negotiated and N was able to stay in her home. A referral was made to Welfare Rights for a Disability Living Allowance claim for N's child which was successful, as was a backdated Carer's Allowance claim and backdated Child Tax Credit's disability element which meant the benefit cap was removed.

N and her children remain in their home and N now has sufficient income to meet their needs until she is able to return to work following her operation.

### 3: Help residents to train, gain and remain in employment

**Table 3.1: Number of people supported into employment, self-employment, volunteering or apprenticeships**

	2016-17	Q1 (17-18)	Q2 (17-18)	Q3 (17-18)	Q4 (17-18)	2017-18
<b>Total</b>	667	347	161	232	256	996

#### **Trends:**

Table 3.1 shows that between Q3 and Q4 of 2017-18 the number of residents supported into employment has increased by 71%, however, figures have fluctuated throughout the year as not all partners have consistently reported their figures via the Newcastle Employment Support Compact.

Employment advisors from the Supported Employment Service, Newcastle Futures, YHN, Crisis Skylight Newcastle, JET, and Barnardo's continue to work with residents experiencing significant barriers to employment which must be overcome before work can be considered. Typically, barriers relate to confidence, debt, concerns about being "worse off" and fears about rent affordability. Advisors also note that the changing nature of the labour market has resulted in more temporary and zero-hour contracts or working hours that are not suitable for people with childcare responsibilities. The rise in such employment contracts can create additional pressure for jobseekers. However, services are still supporting clients into employment of all kinds, including garden care, production / manufacturing and barista roles.

#### **What we are doing:**

- The Skills Hub and City Library offer a variety of free workshops and events to help people into work. Details of upcoming events are available [here](#)
- YHN, the Skills Hub and Karbon Homes held an employment event on 6 June 2018, 10.30am to 12.30pm at Newcastle City Library. For more information contact YHN's Employability Team on 0191 278 8730, or email [employabilityteam@yhn.org.uk](mailto:employabilityteam@yhn.org.uk)
- The Supported Employment Service now have FoodWorks Coffee Carts at three locations (YHN House, Allendale Road and the Civic Centre), providing sustainable employment opportunities for 7 vulnerable people. Further information about FoodWorks is available at [www.wemakethingsbetter.co.uk](http://www.wemakethingsbetter.co.uk)
- The Newcastle Employment Support Protocol is a learning framework designed to improve the alignment between employment support and benefit, housing, budgeting and debt advice services. 11 organisations have signed up to the principles set out in the protocol. For more information, e-mail Clare Fish [clare.fish@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:clare.fish@newcastle.gov.uk)
- Skylight's employment service, Newcastle Futures, YHN's employment service and Changing Lives employment service. JET are working on joining the system. For more information, email [activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk)
- The Wise Steps programme, led by The Wise Group, aims to support some of the most disadvantaged people in Newcastle into employment. For more information email [wisesteps@thewisegroup.co.uk](mailto:wisesteps@thewisegroup.co.uk)
- Moving On Tyne and Wear is an employment programme aimed at supporting people aged 25 and older with a significant physical or mental health issue to secure sustainable employment. Changing Lives are part of the Northern Inclusion Consortium who, along with Mental Health Concern, are responsible for the delivery of this programme. For more information visit [www.motw.org.uk](http://www.motw.org.uk)

**What next:**

- We are developing an 'Introduction to Employment Support' e-learning module and face to face training session. These have been delayed due to sickness, but we expect the module to go live and to announce training dates in 2018. For more information email [financial.inclusion@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:financial.inclusion@newcastle.gov.uk)
- We will be promoting cooperative growth – supporting the 40,000 households affected by welfare reforms to participate in the city's economic development; sharing solutions and developing a coordinated, targeted response for residents who need additional support to gain and sustain employment
- The Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer Multidisciplinary Team focus for Q1 of 2018-19 will be employment support, specifically they will be capturing qualitative data to better understand residents' actual and perceived barriers to work. This information will help us to refine the employment support offer in Newcastle

**Case study – Supported Employment Service**

After leaving school, L contacted the Supported Employment Service. L was keen to develop a career in catering and wanted support to improve his communication skills and develop his confidence. A Supported Employment Officer worked with L to:

- Arrange a training placement at FoodWorks Café, and, whilst working at FoodWorks Café, L also undertook a work experience placement in a busy fast food outlet
- Improve customer service skills and communication skills so that L felt confident when dealing with customers
- Secure a hospitality apprenticeship with FoodWorks

L is now gaining valuable experience in food preparation and serving customers at one of the FoodWorks Coffee Carts. Following the completion of his apprenticeship, L will be supported by the team to secure sustainable, paid employment. L said: *"I have learned different types of skills and I'm very proud to have support from the team."*

#### 4: Promote the expansion of affordable credit options as an alternative to expensive high interest credit, such as payday loans or loan sharks

**Table 4.1: Moneywise Credit Union membership and loans granted**

	2016-17	Q1 (17-18)	Q2 (17-18)	Q3 (17-18)	Q4 (17-18)	2017-18
No. of members	8,792	9,032	8,767	11,723	11,352	11,352
Loans granted	2,143	480	507	854	467	2,308
Loan value	£2,158,531	£500,676	£543,000	£789,443	£433,587	£2,266,706

**Table 4.2: Five Lamps loans granted and loan value (Newcastle residents)**

	2016-17	Q1 (17-18)	Q2 (17-18)	Q3 (17-18)	Q4 (17-18)	2017-18
Loans granted	566	81	130	170	76	457
Loan value	£391,695	£58,640	£82,732	£120,631	£53,350	£315,353

#### **Trends:**

Between Q3 and Q4 of 2017-18 Moneywise Credit Union's membership decreased by 3% due to the closure of inactive accounts. Despite this quarter's drop there has been an overall increase in membership (28%) during 2017-18. The number of loans granted in Q4 2017-18 decreased by 45% - this is a seasonal trend also seen in previous years. Whilst a reduction in the number of loans granted is expected this quarter, there has been a 26% increase in loan approval rates in comparison to Q4 2016-17.

Five Lamps have experienced a 55% decrease in the number of loans granted this quarter. As with Moneywise Credit Union, this reduction was expected, and is comparable to the same period last year. Five Lamps no longer have an office in Newcastle and have not undertaken active promotion in the area since 2012. As a result, most of their custom is generated from repeat business.

#### **What we are doing:**

- The Illegal Money Lending Team offers free Stop Loan Shark Awareness Training sessions to organisations and volunteers, to raise awareness of the dangers of loan sharks and how to tackle them. For more information e-mail [natalie.barker@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:natalie.barker@birmingham.gov.uk)
- The Illegal Money Lending Team's Process of Crime Fund is accepting funding applications for projects which help to spread the Stop Loan Sharks message. For more information e-mail [natalie.barker@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:natalie.barker@birmingham.gov.uk). The closing date for funding applications is 30 June 2018
- The Illegal Money Lending Team held a premier of their latest short film, SHARK, at Tyneside Theatre on 5 June 2018
- Moneywise Credit Union is working with staff at the Royal Victoria Infirmary and the Freeman Hospital to promote their payroll savings scheme. Organisations interested in offering a payroll deduction scheme for staff can e-mail [symon.agnew@moneywise.org.uk](mailto:symon.agnew@moneywise.org.uk)
- Moneywise Credit Union is working with YHN to promote the benefits of regular saving with new apprentices
- Representatives from Moneywise Credit Union attended the Pottery Bank Community Centre and Riverside Community Health Project to promote the benefits of saving regularly and affordable credit

- Representatives from Moneywise Credit Union attended the 1001 Critical Days (pregnancy preparation events) at Sure Start centres across the city to discuss benefits of saving regularly and affordable credit
- Moneywise Credit Union has worked with the Illegal Money Lending Team to raise awareness of the dangers of loan sharks in Walker. A promotional took place on 23 May 2018 at St. Anthony's of Padua allowing new members who commit to saving for 3 months to receive £25 in their savings account. For more information contact Moneywise Credit Union on 0191 2767693
- Five Lamps is working in partnership with ASDA to promote affordable credit options to customers. Further information is available at [www.money.asda.com/personal-loans/](http://www.money.asda.com/personal-loans/)

#### **What next:**

- Representatives from Moneywise Credit Union are scheduled to speak at the Newcastle University Governing Inclusive Finance workshop in June 2018
- Moneywise Credit Union is working with Unison to develop credit union awareness sessions for Newcastle City Council employees based at Westgate College. Sessions will be delivered in July 2018. For more information contact Jane Yugire [jane.yugire@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:jane.yugire@newcastle.gov.uk)
- In March 2017 Money Advice Service (MAS) released the [Standard Financial Statement \(SFS\)](#), a single format for financial statements, allowing debt advisors and creditors to work together to achieve the best outcomes for people struggling with their finances. We are consulting with MAS about Newcastle City Council's Corporate Debt Strategy to help us create more consistency between Newcastle City council's collection departments and debt advisers, and a smoother transition through the debt collection process for residents who owe money to Newcastle City Council

## 5: Reduce fuel poverty, increase financial resilience and promote access to bank accounts

**Table 5.1: Energy Services new referrals, cases closed and financial outputs**

	2016-17	Q1 (17-18)	Q2 (17-18)	Q3 (17-18)	Q4 (17-18)	2017-18
New YHN referrals	251	68	56	82	128	334
New non YHN enquiries	56	8	16	12	31	67
Energy debts written off	£82,224	£28,317	£29,635	£29,410	£17,346	£104,708
Total cases closed	254	50	75	82	52	259
Average financial gains	£323.72	£566.34	£395.93	£358.66	£333.56	£404.28

**Table 5.2: Citizens Advice Newcastle's Northern Powergrid Fuel Debt Project's new clients seen and fuel debt issues dealt with**

	2016-17	Q1 (17-18)	Q2 (17-18)	Q3 (17-18)	Q4 (17-18)	2017-18
New clients	533	99	101	116	250	566
Issues addressed	1,341	175	195	183	425	978

### Trends:

Newcastle City Council's Energy Services provide specialist energy saving and fuel debt advice to Newcastle residents and fuel debt casework. Table 5.1 shows that between Q3 and Q4 of 2017-18 there was a 69% increase in the number of referrals and enquiries received. Whilst this is higher than expected for the period, analysis shows that the reasons for referral are similar to previous quarters – fuel debt (48% of referrals in Q4 2017-18), advice regarding high fuel bills (40% of referrals in Q4 2017-18) and general energy advice (38% of referrals in Q4 2017-18). Clients can receive advice for more than one issue. The average financial gain per client was £333.56 during this quarter.

CAN's Northern Powergrid Fuel Debt Project started in October 2014. It provides a daily drop-in face-to-face specialist advice for residents experiencing problems with energy bills and fuel debt, including advice on reducing energy costs by switching tariffs, payment methods or suppliers, and saving money through energy efficiency, or help with current supply problems, including debts and disputed bills. Table 5.2 above shows that between Q3 and Q4 of 2017-18, the number of new clients seen increased by 116% and the issues addressed increased by 132%. This is due to an additional Energy Officer now being in post and targeted work with partners.

### What we are doing

- Newcastle City Council's Crisis Support Scheme provided 263 fuel top-up vouchers during Q4 of 2017-18
- CAN have a hardship fund to support vulnerable clients (based on Ofgem's definition of vulnerability) experiencing hardship, for example benefit delays, with a one-off short-term emergency payment via the Northern Powergrid Fuel Debt Project. For more information contact the team by e-mail [powergrid@newcastlecab.org.uk](mailto:powergrid@newcastlecab.org.uk) or phone 0370 1451450

- Newcastle City Council is running an energy price comparison and switching scheme. For more information visit [www.newcastle.gov.uk/energyswitch](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/energyswitch)
- Newcastle City Council have been awarded £400,000 from National Grid to install gas central heating systems for fuel poor households without central heating. For more information contact Energy Services on 0191 2783427
- Newcastle City Council have secured funding from National Grid to provide support to residents who are home owners or are living in private rented accommodation. For more information contact Energy Services on 0191 2783427
- Warm Zone offer assistance to low income home owners who suffer from a health condition made worse by living in a cold or damp home. For more information phone 0800 0199969
- YHN's 'Void Affinity' scheme which allows the energy supply for their empty properties to be switched to a preferred supplier, was successfully completed. A procurement is underway to appoint a supplier for the next two years

**What next:**

- Energy Services have reviewed best practice from the other cities which have decided to have a greater role in the supply of energy to their communities. An energy company options appraisal is being carried out with other North East local authorities and NEPO

**Case study - Energy Services**

V was referred to Energy Services by YHN's Repairs Team because she had a high electricity bill and energy debts which she was not able to pay. Energy Services contacted V's energy supplier who agreed to investigate the charges.

The balance was investigated, V's electricity bill had been based on estimated usage which had led to a large catch up debt. In addition, the charges were incorrect due to the day and night electricity rates being mixed up. Once the rates for V's electricity were corrected and the Back Billing Code of Practice was applied V's energy debt was reduced by £2,506, leaving an outstanding balance of £25. Energy Services were able to get the remaining balance written off as a goodwill gesture.

As a result of Energy Services support, V is free from energy debt and worry.

## Active Inclusion Newcastle

The Financial Inclusion Group is part of the Active Inclusion Newcastle partnership approach that responds to the growth in demand for information, advice and support to promote social and financial inclusion and to prevent the risk of homelessness with reduced resources. The Active Inclusion Newcastle partnership coordinates responses to the welfare reforms, austerity and destitution by creating the conditions for stability:

- **An income**
- **Somewhere to live**
- **Financial inclusion – life without excessive debt**
- **Training and employment opportunities**

The Active Inclusion Newcastle partnership provides and supports partners to deliver the following:

**Primary prevention activities** – to support making the prevention of homelessness and destitution ‘everyone’s business’:

- Information for professionals, volunteers and the public – financial inclusion examples are available online at [www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals)
- Consultancy advice for professionals and volunteers – contact details are available online at [www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals)
- Briefing sessions for professionals and volunteers – to request a briefing, email [activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:activeinclusion@newcastle.gov.uk)
- Spectrums of advice – details are available online at [www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals)
- Training for professionals and volunteers – details of e-learning modules and face to face training sessions are available online at [www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals)
- Protocols and policies – details are available online at [www.newcastle.gov.uk/homelessnesspreventionforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/homelessnesspreventionforprofessionals)
- Partnerships and governance – details are available online at [www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals)
- Copies of previous quarterly reviews are available online at [www.newcastle.gov.uk/benefits-and-council-tax/welfare-rights-and-money-advice/information-professionals-and-volunteers/financial-inclusion-group](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/benefits-and-council-tax/welfare-rights-and-money-advice/information-professionals-and-volunteers/financial-inclusion-group)

**Secondary prevention activities** – specialist advice and accommodation services that community based primary services can turn to when they need help

**Crisis activities** – services that support people facing destitution when community and preventative support fails to prevent crisis

## Next steps and how to get involved

The issues raised in this briefing were discussed at the Newcastle Advice Compact meeting on 20 June 2018. Feedback has been incorporated into this document which will be presented to councillors and the Financial Inclusion Group at our next seminar on 12 July 2018.

For more information on financial inclusion:

visit [www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/financialinclusionforprofessionals) or contact Clare Fish by phone 0191 277 7529, or e-mail [clare.fish@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:clare.fish@newcastle.gov.uk)